

12 November 1975

STAT

CIA Professionals Hail Church Attack on Bush

By Norman Kempster
Washington Star Staff Writer

Since President Ford selected George Bush to head the CIA, many of the agency's career employees are finding themselves enjoying the remarks of congressional intelligence investigators they once considered carping critics.

One source with knowledge of coffee-break conversation at CIA headquarters said the agency's professional staff has been cheered by calls for keeping the CIA out of domestic politics.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Frank Church, D-Idaho, yesterday reeled off a list of agency successes which sounded very like some of the predissmissal speeches of outgoing CIA Director William E. Colby.

CHURCH, previously accused by some of the agency's friends of dwelling on failures and law violations, insisted that the nation has been better served in the years since World War II by the intelligence estimates of the CIA than by the predictions of the military services.

The purpose of Church's praise was to advance his campaign to reject the nomination of Bush, the former Republican national chairman. Church said last week that he would vote against the nomination. Yesterday, he called on the Senate to join him.

"It is imperative that we preserve the professional stature of the Central Intelligence Agency, keeping it free from the eroding forces of politics and partisanship," Church said in a speech to a nearly empty Senate chamber.

"Only in this way will the CIA continue to serve as an adequate coun-

terbalance to the intelligence estimates from the military services," he said. "If the Central Intelligence Agency becomes so discredited through an overemphasis on its failures in the drawing of estimates, we may find this crucial task lodged exclusively within the Pentagon in the future."

CHURCH said the agency has been successful in estimates ranging from Soviet military strength to the way oil-producing countries will invest their "petrodollars."

"If CIA assessments should collide with a favored course of action at the White House, would a dedicated party man like Mr. Bush be able to stand up to the pressures from a Republican president in an election year?" Church said. "The question answers itself."

The vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, Sen. John Tower, R-Tex., told reporters later that he anticipates no real trouble with the confirmation of Bush, a fellow Texan.

"I don't really see much opposition to it," Tower said. "What there is seems to be fairly vocal."

TOWER, who has been one of the most outspoken supporters of the CIA on the committee, voiced no difference of opinion with Church's praise for the agency's successes. But he could not resist a dig at the chairman.

If former national party chairman should be ineligible to head the CIA, Tower said, perhaps "anybody who investigates the CIA ought to forswear further political activity." The reference was to Church's interest in seeking the Democratic presidential nomination.